

-- Draft --
**Sierra Nevada Conservancy
2012-13 Action Plan**

The following represent the major initiatives and activities to be undertaken by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) between March 2012 and June 2013, consistent with the SNC's Strategic Plan (Plan). Upon approval by the SNC Governing Board, staff will use this Plan to guide activities for the period. In the event that circumstances lead to other initiatives or activities being undertaken, staff will provide the Board with updated information at a subsequent Board meeting.

Grant Program

Several important actions will be completed under the SNC Grant Program before June 2013, including:

- Closing-out Fiscal Year (FY) 2007-08 grant projects.
- Awarding the remaining Proposition 84 bond funds by completing the FY 2011-12 and 2012-13 grant awards from solicitation through the execution of grant agreements.
- Developing the operational policies and procedures necessary to improve the efficiency of the program.
- Continuing to effectively and efficiently meet reporting requirements related to bond expenditures and future bond sales.

Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI)

The SNC will continue to coordinate implementation of the SNFCI, working closely with a wide range of stakeholders and agencies. Specific actions to be accomplished under SNFCI include:

- Continuing to support local collaborative efforts to develop projects consistent with SNFCI objectives.
- Working with the SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council, the U.S. Forest Service, other state agencies and key stakeholders in identifying and supporting up to four demonstration projects showcasing ecological restoration in forested areas with strong collaboration and a focus on improving the local economies and social well-being.
- Working with the Coordinating Council and the Forest Service to complete the Leadership Intent for Ecological Restoration Implementation Plan.
- Participating in various efforts to promote policy changes and investment in support of SNFCI objectives, including the Biomass Working Group, Sierra Cascade Dialogue, and the Interagency Forest Working Group.

Regional Water

This project will continue relationship-building activities to establish the SNC as an accepted and trusted resource among local/state/federal agencies, decision-makers and stakeholders. Several actions will be undertaken as part of this project:

- Coordinating Regional input and engagement in the Department of Water Resources' (DWR) Water Plan Update 2013 (including serving as lead author for the Mountain Counties Overlay Regional Report).
- Providing input on Sierra issues and interests in the draft Delta Plan.
- Coordinating efforts to retain Regional funding in the 2012 water bond and/or other funding mechanisms.
- Supporting Sierra-based Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) groups to enable them to compete more successfully for DWR planning and implementation funds.

Regional Agricultural and Ranching

Under this new initiative, the SNC will focus on assessing the needs of farmers and ranchers in the Region and taking action to the extent feasible to address these needs. Specific actions will include:

- Implementing the 2012-13 Grant program, which will focus on high benefit projects that help to preserve ranches and agricultural lands in the Region.
- Assessing the gaps in research and information and determining how to work collaboratively with other organizations to address these needs and gaps.
- Facilitating discussions on key issues in an effort to reach consensus, for example, livestock grazing on federal lands (Kern Plateau).

Geotourism

The SNC will continue to coordinate with the Sierra Business Council, National Geographic and numerous local partners to add authentic content to the Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide Project website and to draw more visitors to the site. Actions to be undertaken by June 2013 include:

- Completing California Historical Landmark and Watchable Wildlife destination pages.
- Distributing 100,000 printed MapGuides.
- Making a free down-loadable mobile phone application available to the public through existing application stores.
- Implementing a marketing plan aimed at increasing the amount of web traffic visiting the site on a monthly basis.
- Completing a study to assess website impact and response in communities.

- Continuing to participate in the National Geocouncil with seven other U.S. Geotourism projects to leverage marketing and advertising opportunities across the country.

Ecosystem Services

The SNC will work with partners to undertake a number of actions under this initiative which will quantify environmental benefits in the upper watershed:

- Coordinating the completion of Phase 1 of the Mokelumne Watershed Avoided Cost Analysis, which will analyze how upper watershed restoration treatments, primarily fuel hazard reduction and forest health management, will benefit downstream beneficiaries and reduce operational costs of energy and water delivery agencies.
- Assisting in convening key parties to discuss findings and conclusions from this analysis and determining next steps.
- Supporting at least one other effort in the Sierra to quantify the water yield and movement benefits of restoring the forests and watersheds to ecological health.

Education and Communications

The SNC will identify key audiences, update messages and develop informational materials and tools to more effectively engage policy-makers, decision-makers and stakeholders in the SNC's key initiatives. The outreach will focus primarily on the links between clean and reliable water, healthy forests and sustainable rural communities.

Actions will include the following:

- Meeting with key legislators/staff and key stakeholder groups regarding SNC initiatives.
- Developing targeted messages and outreach materials geared specifically for the water bond, SNFCI, Geotourism and Regional Agriculture and Ranching initiatives.
- Creating and distributing the FY 2011-12 Annual Report.
- Completing a plan for making more effective use of the SNC Web site as a communications vehicle.

Funding Development

The SNC will focus its fund development efforts on three primary actions between now and June 2013:

- Continuing to track and publicize funding opportunities for the SNC and Regional stakeholders through the Current Funding Opportunities (CFO) newsletter.
- Implementing portions of the funding plan being developed for the SNC by consultants under contract.
- Providing grant writing assistance for projects developed by partners as part of a major initiative, such as SNFCI, Regional Water, Great Sierra River Cleanup, etc.

Great Sierra River Cleanup

The SNC will coordinate the 4th Annual Great Sierra River Cleanup on September 15, 2012. In 2011, nearly 4,000 volunteers joined together to remove approximately 251 tons of trash and recyclables from rivers throughout the Sierra Nevada. Specific actions will include:

- Continuing to work with existing river cleanups throughout the Sierra to unite and expand them.
- Recruiting organizations in areas with no river cleanup programs to host cleanups in their areas.

Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council (Stewardship Council)

The SNC will work with the Stewardship Council to take the actions necessary to carry out duties outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (including amendments mutually agreed upon). Specific actions will include the following:

- Executing agreements to accept covenants on lands donated to the U.S. Forest Service.
- Finalizing agreements for SNC to carry out certain duties upon the dissolution of the Stewardship Council, including selection of replacement conservation easement holders and performing monitoring activities.
- Establishing a funding mechanism to compensate the SNC for tasks performed as described in MOU and subsequent agreements.

Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery

The SNC will continue to coordinate and facilitate discussions and planning with the California Department of Fish and Game, Inyo County, the Friends of the Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery and other stakeholders to develop a long term master plan for the Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery and surrounding property. Several specific actions will be undertaken under the project, including:

- Convening a workgroup to develop a process for exploring potential uses, ownership and management of the property.
- Developing a master plan for the property to guide decision-making.
- Identifying additional stakeholders to engage in the process.
- Effectuating the transfer of property, if deemed necessary and appropriate.
- Determining what, if any, role is appropriate for the SNC in the ultimate disposition of the property and ongoing management.

Sierra Nevada System Indicators

The SNC will continue the development of indicators that will be used by the SNC staff and Board, and externally by SNC partners and other interested parties to promote

Regional understanding, make sound investments, guide strategic decision-making, and help us to gauge the results of our efforts. Specific action under the project will involve:

- Publishing, following Board approval, the last three in a series of five reports that present the data and analysis associated with nineteen Sierra Nevada System Indicators.

Internal Operations

The SNC will improve its internal operations in a number of areas, including taking the following actions:

- Developing a department-wide training plan that will identify training needs and include mechanisms that will track staff training assignment and completion.
- Continuing implementation of IT system improvements including conversion to the State website template, full deployment of SNC's content management software (Plone), web maintenance server upgrades, improved field office service, and improved IT policies and procedures.
- Assessing and strengthening the development and use of its SharePoint-based intranet sites and tools.
- Improving emergency preparedness and safety through additional training, table top exercises and drills.